

ADDRESS OF SENATOR THRUSTON B. MORTON, R.-KY., BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF BUSINESS EXECUTIVES FOR PEACE IN VIETNAM, SEPTEMBER 27, 1967, 10 a.m., STATLER HILTON HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D.C.

The last three years have witnessed a disastrous decline in the effectiveness of American foreign policy. The root cause of the trouble is the bankruptcy of our position in Vietnam.

The ramifications of the tragic decision to commit United States forces in strength to an Asian ground war are everywhere evident. A crisis of confidence and credibility threatens to undermine the nation's hopes for economic and social progress here at home. Around the world, American principles and programs are suspect, by friend and foe alike.

The Americanization of the conflict in Vietnam has created a kind of myopia that prevents the Administration from effectively coping with major problems elsewhere. The number one priority of United States foreign policy must be to reach an accord with the Soviet Union.

The world's two mightiest powers have no alternative to developing a set of ground rules that will prevent holocaust, and permit peaceful progress, however bitterly competitive. Vietnam stands in the way!

In Europe, a revolution of independence challenges American initiative, but Vietnam stands in the way. In Latin America a revolution of rising populations and rising expectations threatens the future of our own continent. More imagination and energy must be devoted to these areas---vital to our national interest---but Vietnam stands in the way.

On the domestic front, apprehension and misunderstanding of our involvement in Southeast Asia are contributing to a dangerous political polarization. Extremists of the left and right are poised to destroy our basic social fabric, while men of reason are reduced to answering "after Vietnam!"

How did we reach this impasse? And where do we go from here?

President Eisenhower warned in his "Farewell Address" of the danger of too much power and too much influence in the hands of a 'military-industrial complex.' I believe that President Johnson was brainwashed by this power center as early as 1961 when, as Vice President, he ventured to Saigon on a fact-finding mission. I believe he has been mistakenly committed to a military solution in Vietnam for the past five years---with only a brief pause during the election campaign of 1964 to brainwash the American people with 'the war in Vietnam ought to be fought by Asian boys.'

If the President of the United States has been mistaken, so have I. In early 1965 when the President began to escalate the war, I supported the increased

While I believed then that we should not telegraph our punches, as the President's program of gradual or phased step-up clearly did, I have grave doubts today that any military action, then or now, would have decisively influenced the conflict.

The basic mistake of the Administration has been its failure to give proper emphasis to the political nature of the war in Vietnam. And the basic but overwhelming reality in Vietnam today is that a political victory may well be out of reach.

I am convinced that further military escalation and an additional United States military commitment will not obtain our objectives of peace in Vietnam. I am convinced that unless we gradually and, if necessary, unilaterally reduce the scope of our military involvement we may well destroy the very society we sought to save.

The President has said the war 'is worth the price.' There is absolutely no indication that the Vietnamese agree. They want peace period!

We face a clear dilemma. Can we accomplish in Vietnam the limited objective we want and, at the same time, provide the Vietnamese with the security they want? The simple, brutal truth is: No!

Therefore, we must decide---without delay---on a course of political and diplomatic action that offers some hope of settlement. We must make it crystal clear to the American people that there is no military solution in Vietnam. We must put an immediate ceiling on further U.S. military action and open up every possible avenue toward negotiations.

None of our options will be painless, but who would claim that present policies have been without pain.

None of our options will be cheap, but who would claim that present policies have not been costly.

There have been alternatives offered before that have been rejected out of hand as too painful and too dear. But in retrospect, these lost opportunities have looked like bargains once the chances to take advantage of them have passed us by.

I believe it would be a national, and indeed an international, tragedy if the Administration permits any further suggestions for an end to the war to pass by unexamined and unexplored.

With absolutely no claims to expertise or originality, I believe the United States should consider the following:

1. An immediate cessation of all bombing of North Vietnam. I do not share, at this time, the concern of many that missions close to the border of China present a grave risk of intervention. I do not question the effectiveness of the bombing of the North upon the war in the South. I believe that an indefinite bombing halt just might encourage Hanoi to talk, and I believe we must give it a

2. An end to all search and destroy missions. The price has not been worth the accomplishments. And the price everyday goes up. Furthermore, the cost in civilian casualties and disruptions only adds to the growing disaffection of the Vietnamese population toward their American 'saviors.'

3. A gradual concentration of effort to secure the coastal and population centers of South Vietnam where a vast majority of the people live. This can and must be accomplished with a substantial reduction in American troop strength. The 'over-presence' of our forces has contributed to a mounting tide of anti-Americanism among the Vietnamese populace.

4. Increased pressure upon the Saigon government to negotiate and to institute widespread reform. The only hope for any form of representative government or any kind of civil order lies basically with the Vietnamese and their leaders ---the present regime and the NLF. We can encourage reform, but we cannot impose a military occupation or a colonial government.

5. An internal and regional settlement. The thrust toward negotiations, toward a cease-fire, and toward a long range solution to the conflict that has torn the entire Indochinese peninsular asunder for a generation has to be initiated locally. A climate for talks: between South Vietnamese and South Vietnamese, between North and South, between Laos, Cambodia, North and South Vietnam and Thailand, between the free, neutral and Communist nations of Asia, must be developed by Asians themselves. We must do more to encourage them.

I devoutly wish that the United Nations had the will and the wherewithall to accomplish this task, but such is unfortunately not the case. It is apparent that a return to Geneva is probably out of the question. Perhaps there is still hope that a regional or All-Asian peace conference, without outside involvement, could set the stage for meaningful local initiative toward peace and progress.

6. The Administration should precisely state to Hanoi and the world that our unilateral disengagement seeks an appropriate response. Let there be no doubt, in any quarter, that while we will take the first steps down the long and tortuous road toward peace in Vietnam, we pray for an equally positive response. Let there be no doubt upon whose shoulders will lie the responsibility for continued chaos and devastation, should our efforts fail.